

# Pencalenick Residential Special School

Pencalenick School, St. Clement, Truro, Cornwall TR1 1TE

<b>Inspection dates</b>	20/03/2017 to 22/03/2017	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is good because

- The school effectively demonstrates that boarding has a very positive impact on boarders. Improvements in academic achievement, social and emotional well-being, and the development of independence skills are exceptional. Feedback from boarders and their parents/guardians is consistently very good.
- Care is provided by a qualified team of staff that understands the unique needs of each boarder. Relationships are mutually respectful. Staff create an atmosphere which is welcoming, caring and great fun. Boarders feel valued and look out for one another. Their acceptance of difference and tolerance of one another is extraordinary.
- Boarders feel safe in this environment. Staff effectively implement risk assessments to avoid unnecessary risk taking. This allows boarders to take age-appropriate risks, which develop their skills and build self-esteem. Relationships between boarders and care staff are such that boarders can express their feelings freely and trust the adults around them to act in their best interests. Safeguarding knowledge and practice among the staff are up to date.
- Induction planning for boarders starting to use this service and planning for when they move on to 6th-form colleges are well orchestrated. Staff work in partnership with parents/guardians and those providing community resources to ensure the success of these changes.
- Behaviour management is focused on rewards and praise. Staff model appropriate behaviour to boarders. A major advantage of having a consistent staff team is the

team's knowledge of boarder's behaviour. Staff are able to pick up on the slightest nuance of difficulty and intervene to avoid incidents. The use of physical intervention to manage behaviour is rare. In addition, boarders do not feel it necessary to run away from or go missing from the residential provision.

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- 20.2 Most monitoring visits are carried out unannounced. They include: checks on the school's records of attendance, complaints, sanctions, use of reasonable force, risk assessments, and, where they exist, individual care plans for children; evaluation of the effectiveness of the care provided to children and whether they are safeguarded; assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment of the school; and opportunities for any child or member of staff who wishes to meet the visitor (in private if they wish).
- 20.4 The headteacher (or school equivalent), governing body, trustees, partnership, or organisation responsible for carrying on the school carries out, and records in writing, once each year: a review of the operation and resourcing of the school's welfare provision for boarding pupils, in relation to: its statement of purpose; its staffing policy; the placement plans for individual children; and an internal assessment of its compliance with these standards. Where appropriate, such a report may be incorporated within a review of the whole school.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that staff receive supervision which is fully compliant with the supervision policy, and links consistently with findings from monitoring carer's roles and responsibilities.
- Continue to refurbish the residential provision to avoid any institutional feel.
- Summarise care plans for ease of reference and access to information.
- Record clearly that all boarders and staff have practised an emergency evacuation of the premises.

## Information about this inspection

Three hours' notice of this inspection was given to the school. Inspection activity included spending time with boarders, talking to boarders individually and in small groups, taking meals with boarders and sharing their activity and leisure time. Discussions took place with the chief executive officer (CEO), chair of governors and the governor responsible for boarding, headteacher, head of care and a significant number of other staff, while visiting all areas of the boarding accommodation and some of the grounds. There were also observation of staff interactions with boarders in a variety of settings, checking of key documents and policies, telephone discussions with key stakeholders, in particular parents/guardians of boarders.

## Inspection team

Janice Hawtin

Lead social care inspector

## **Full report**

### **Information about this school**

Pencalenick School is an academy for 111 children, aged from 11 to 16 years, who have complex communication and learning disabilities, including autism. Thirty-one children up to the age of 16 years board at the school from Monday to Thursday. They may stay for up to four nights. The school is situated within a large country estate with extensive grounds, in close proximity to the city of Truro. The boarding accommodation comprises parts of two floors in the main school building.

## Inspection judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Good**

In addition to academic achievements, boarders are also developing interpersonal skills through the opportunities to spend time with peers and make friends. They are engaging in team and individual activities and spending time in the community.

Social and emotional development was notable during a school trip to Wales. Those who have experience of boarding and being away from parents did not have significant issues with separation anxiety or homesickness.

The development of practical skills is encouraged, and all boarders have independence targets linked to their ability. These are planned in very small stages if necessary, and progress is celebrated and rewarded. Targets are agreed by boarders and their parents. Regular review and update of plans ensure the continuous progress made by boarders. Parents are pleased with the progress made and said that this has made a big difference at home where boarders continue to use their new skills and have become less reliant on their parents.

Relationships between boarders and care staff are especially good. Staff create an atmosphere that is both calm and great fun for boarders to spend time in. There is a lot of laughter and camaraderie between and among staff and boarders. Boarders said that they are happy and enjoy spending time together.

Boarders know what to expect and can reliably predict the responses of the adults who care for them. This adds to their sense of self-worth and self-esteem. They have the confidence to make choices and take some risks in learning new skills and trying out activities for the first time.

Citizenship is promoted, and rewards are offered for taking on additional responsibilities, volunteering to do jobs and for demonstrating kindness to others. Boarders learn about the wider world. They are engaged in charity events. All the pupils were excited about taking part in Red Nose Day and raising money for others.

Links into the community provide work experience opportunities for some boarders. Among several opportunities, they have worked in shops, cafes and at a local nursery. There have also been some business enterprise schemes developed, and pupils provide flower displays to a local business.

The food provided is cooked on the premises from fresh ingredients. There is a small cottage garden tended by pupils, which provides some fresh produce enjoyed by boarders. Food is plentiful, varied and enjoyed by the majority. Some boarders have extended what was a very limited diet after being encouraged by the staff. Snacks, fruit and drinks are readily available during boarding time.

### The quality of care and support

**Outstanding**

Care is provided by a stable, qualified and experienced staff team. Team members consistently speak positively and with great pride about the achievements of the

boarders whom they care for. There is no doubt that the relationship between boarders and staff is based on mutual respect and genuine affection. The positive atmosphere created impacts on boarders' emotional well-being. They develop self-esteem and confidence and are keen to talk about the boarding experience and how much they enjoy spending time as boarders.

Boarding at the school adds significant value to the lives of boarders. They make sustained and consistent progress both academically and personally. This progress is over and above that made by pupils who are non-boarders. The care staff are resourceful in working together with families and professional stakeholders to ensure that boarders have opportunities to develop their full potential. Staff regularly support families who needed additional resources and, in particular, they helped to resolve a difficult behavioural issue, which has proved of huge benefit to both a boarder and his family.

Evening activities are planned in advance, informed by choices made by boarders and their skills development or health needs. A record of participation is kept to ensure equal access and opportunity for all. Specialist services are commissioned to provide some activities; boarders are currently enjoying the outdoors while learning bush craft skills. Some boarders benefit from the support of a cricket coach. Activities are developing their social and emotional skills and well-being. There are frequent social events, such as film nights. Boarders eat well-prepared nutritious home-cooked food together. They have also been making fresh bread for breakfast, which is appreciated by all. It is evident that they learn from the adults around them to be accepting of difference and to help one another out.

The boarding provision is a fully integrated and valued part of the school. The care provided and attention to progressing pupils is seamless across the two resources. Information is shared freely between those who need to know and is accessible electronically. Boarding staff are made aware of any particular issues occurring in the school day or in home life, which may impact on a boarder's emotional health or well-being. Additional support is provided when necessary.

The views and wishes of boarders are considered important and are valued in both providing and developing the service. Boarders are encouraged to make choices as a matter of course. The majority express their feelings without hesitation. In addition, formal meetings are held, which are purposeful in gathering boarders' views. These meetings also provide opportunities for discussions and for staff to test understanding of important issues, such as internet safety. Boarders have achieved changes to menus, promoted activities and influenced the purchase of furniture and fittings.

Boarders take part in any review of their care and are encouraged to attend their planning meetings. Records are kept of boarders' progress and a lasting memory of their time at the school is compiled throughout their stay. This is for the most part based on photographs, which can be enjoyed by most boarders regardless of their ability.

The feedback from stakeholders, particularly parents, is without exception very positive. A parent commented, 'If I won the lottery tomorrow and could choose any school for my son, I would still choose Pencalenick.' Other parents have been surprised at the progress made in a short space of time, describing boarders who now 'make their own beds at home', 'have started to dress themselves' and 'shower without help'.

Inductions for boarders are carefully planned. Information is sought from a range of

interested parties, including parents, previous schools and boarders. This allows for understanding the life and needs of the boarder, and guides the production of detailed care planning. Independence planning is a particular focus for boarders. Alongside the naturally occurring opportunities to develop social and emotional skills, each boarder has unique targets for personal development. All boarders are encouraged to do as much as possible for themselves with the support and guidance from staff.

Boarders moving on to further education are prepared in advance. Work experience is sourced for boarders, and links are made with further education providers. When possible, those preparing to move on will spend some of their school time with the future education provider. Boarders come from all areas of Cornwall. Links back into their own communities are established to avoid social isolation once they move on from this school. The school works in partnership with sports providers, including football teams, surfing schools and tennis clubs, to establish social networks. Boarders have opportunities to take part in competitions, including Cornwall School Games. For the less sporty boarders, there are alternatives, including links with art and music projects.

### **How well children and young people are protected**

**Good**

Without hesitation, boarders reported that they feel safe and like the staff who look after them. Parents also feel that their children are kept safe in this school.

Boarders are increasingly safe because of the support and consideration provided by carers. Appropriate levels of supervision are provided by staff. During the night, a member of staff stays awake to deal with any issues and to provide support if needed. Risk is understood and managed effectively to avoid unnecessary risk taking. This allows boarders to develop skills and to take part in a varied range of age-appropriate activities.

Staff are experienced and trained to recognise and deal effectively with any concerns that they may have about a child's welfare or safety. Policies are in place and regularly reviewed. Contact details of the local safeguarding board are readily available, should staff need additional support to report an incident. There are three designated, specifically trained safeguarding officers in the school, and at least one is always on the site. Staff have not had to deal with any safeguarding issues or allegations since the previous inspection. All staff are aware of the whistleblowing requirements should they have any concerns. Boarders said that they can tell an adult and share any concerns if they need to. The complaints policy is clear to staff, most boarders (dependant on their understanding) and parents. Any issues or concerns are dealt with immediately, and complaints have not been made.

Boarders' safety has been increased by the installation of a perimeter fence around the site and closed-circuit television (CCTV) at the gated entry. This is a new addition since the previous inspection and avoids undesirable intrusion onto the site.

There has not been any recruitment of new staff to the boarding provision since the previous inspection. Arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff are in place. Safeguarding checks are sought, including applications to the Disclosure and Barring Service, which can identify those who are unsuitable to work with vulnerable children. An improved checklist is in place to ensure the suitability of all future checks.

Boarders have not gone missing from this site, nor are they involved in harmful activities such as smoking or alcohol consumption. Staff are aware of potential issues. They are guided by policy and practice documents and receive appropriate training to equip them to keep boarders safe.

The management of behaviour is based on rewards, praise and encouragement. Staff's knowledge and understanding of boarders is such that they can identify early any signs of discontent or difficulties and act to avoid escalation. Expectations of behaviour are clear. Kindness and consideration are modelled by staff. It has not been necessary to use physical intervention to manage behaviour and keep boarders safe for some time. However, staff are trained in these techniques should this be necessary.

Governors have oversight of the safeguarding practice and policies. The chair of governors takes a particular interest in the safety of the site. He has introduced additional monitoring procedures for caretakers and attends regular meetings to discuss health and safety.

The school works closely with the fire brigade to help boarders to understand risk and what action to take in the event of an emergency. Staff also undertake fire safety training as part of their induction. Early detection and alarm systems are tested weekly to ensure that they are effective. Boarders who have additional needs have individual evaluation plans, and a fire register is updated daily for use in case of evacuation. Records of evacuations do not readily demonstrate that all staff and boarders have had a chance to practise fire drills.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

**Good**

Leadership and management of the boarding provision are convincingly good. There is a dedicated head of care and deputy supported by the headmistress and the CEO of the academy trust. Together, they have a clear vision for the future. Plans are in place to promote continuous practice development. These are informed and monitored, alongside feedback from boarders and other stakeholders. There is a distinct aim among leaders and staff for the provision to be outstanding in all areas.

The care provided is described in the statement of purpose, which is readily available. The school maintains a website containing useful and essential information for parents, stakeholders and boarders. Policy documents and notices are easy to access, and the site includes photographs and videos of some of the work and activities undertaken by boarders. This site is particularly encouraging for parents and children who may be considering applying for a place at the school.

The training and support provided to staff equip them to complete their roles and responsibilities to boarders. Formal supervision is provided on a regular basis, and all care staff have annual appraisals of their work and opportunities for further development.

The staff team is stable and offers continuity of practice and consistency to boarders. Sufficiency of staffing allows staff to provide the support and guidance needed and to encourage boarders to try out new activities and learn additional skills. Staff report enjoying the work and especially spending time with the boarders. Morale among staff is high.



The head of care monitors and updates policy documents to ensure that they are kept up to date. Audits of boarders' files, which include care plans, are also undertaken by leaders. This ensures that staff are meeting the needs of the boarders in their care. Checks also include making sure that targets for development are realistic and that progress is being achieved.

Parents reported that they feel supported by the staff and can rely on them to do what is best, not only for their children but to benefit the whole family. One commented, 'They go over and above what is expected, and we are lucky to have this school.'

Monitoring by the independent visitor is not sufficiently robust. Several visits have been announced, and not all are at a time when it would be possible to speak with or observe boarders outside of school hours. Reports do not clearly demonstrate that staff and boarders have been given the opportunity to speak to the visitor in private. It is not clear how the independent visitor keeps up to date with current practice, essential training and research. Some challenge has been made, following these visits, on one occasion resulting in boarders' care plans being updated.

Reports to demonstrate internal assessment and compliance with the national minimum standards were not readily available during the inspection. This was one of just two requirements which need attention. Leaders and managers welcomed the feedback from the inspection activities, and the head of care produced a nearly complete action plan to incorporate opportunities for improvement before the inspector had left the premises.

Recommendations made at the previous inspection have been addressed. Improvements to the boarding provision are ongoing and somewhat thwarted by the historic status and age of the building. This does not seem to detract from the benefit that this service provides or impact on the well-being of boarders. The grounds and variety of outside space for boarders are exceptional.

## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceed the standard of good and result in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding, and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services, which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children's and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean that children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	<School URN>
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC041223
<b>DfE registration number</b>	

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential special school
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	111
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to16
<b>Headteacher</b>	
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	29/01/2016
<b>Telephone number</b>	01872 520385
<b>Email address</b>	Head@pencalenick.org

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